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ABSTRACT

The Metropolitan Educational Development and Research Project (MEDARP) Documentation Unit, located in the Office of Educational Evaluation (OEE) at the New York City Board of Education, is funded by the Ford Foundation to document, evaluate and provide technical assistance to the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects; these are major school-based constituency planning programs presently operating in the New York City public schools. The Unit also analyzes various documentary and evaluative data collected, and disseminates the results and conclusions of these analyses. The documentation function of the Unit involves the establishment and maintenance of an independent data base which will insure an impartial, detailed, continuous account of the development and progress of the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects. The evaluation activities of the Unit emphasize ongoing project assessments which provide project staff, school participants, and program sponsors with useful feedback regarding the effectiveness of the projects. Technical assistance activities offered to the projects include the development of documentation, evaluation and needs assessment methodologies. The findings of the evaluation reports and analytic papers prepared by the Unit will be widely disseminated through a variety of written and oral presentations. (Author/GK)

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Project Plan: The MEDARP Documentation Unit to the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects

August 1980

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PROJECT ABSTRACT

The MEDARP Documentation Unit is located in the Office of Educational Evaluation (OEE) at the New York City Board of Education. The Unit is funded by the Ford Foundation to document, evaluate and provide technical assistance to the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects; these are major school-based constituency planning programs presently operating in the New York City public schools. The Unit is also responsible for the analysis of the various documentary and evaluative data collected, as well as the dissemination of the results and conclusions of these analyses.

The documentation function of the Unit involves the establishment and maintenance of an independent data base which will insure an impartial, detailed, continuous account of the development and progress of the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects. The evaluation activities of the Unit emphasize ongoing project assessments which provide project staff, school participants, and program sponsors with useful feedback regarding the effectiveness of the projects. Technical assistance activities offered to the projects include the development of documentation, evaluation and needs assessment methodologies. The findings of the evaluation reports and analytic papers prepared by the Unit will be widely disseminated through a variety of written and oral presentations.

INTRODUCTION

The Documentation Unit to the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects is funded by a two-year grant from the Ford Foundation. In funding the Unit, the Ford Foundation hoped to ensure the maintenance of an ongoing record and the in-depth analysis of the process of school self-improvement as fostered by the New York Urban Coalition's Local School Development Project and the School Improvement Project of the New York City Board of Education. The Board of Education accepted the two-year foundation grant with the understanding that MEDARP would utilize the resources of its independent Steering Committee to oversee a neutral assessment of the two projects. Since project directors are normally too involved in carrying out required activities, it is important that an outside unit describe project activities, record the progress of each activity, provide feedback to project personnel, and document the evolution and performance of the improvement projects.

The Documentation Unit is a component of the Metropolitan Educational Development and Research Project (MEDARP) in the Office of Educational Evaluation. MEDARP is a planning project funded by the Spencer Foundation and the National Institute of Education (NIE). It was initiated to establish a research and development capacity for the public school system. The Documentation Unit, as a component of MEDARP, represents an effort by the Board of Education to provide educational programs, such as the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects, with research and evaluation capacities which are useful, relevant and directly supportive of ongoing program functions.

A concern of the Ford Foundation, related to Documentation Unit data analysis activities, was the provision of a formal mechanism which would ensure the objectivity of the Unit. A subcommittee of the MEDARP Steering Committee, an independent advisory group made up of representatives of interested education organizations and institutions, has been formed to perform this role. The subcommittee has reviewed all documentation and assessment methodologies, instruments, analyses and reports developed by the Unit. Members of the Documentation Unit subcommittee include representatives of the United Parents' Association, the Community Superintendents' Association, the State Education Department, and the Division of Curriculum and Instruction (BOE).

In the remainder of this section the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects, and the functions and staffing of the Documentation Unit will be described.

The School Improvement Project

The School Improvement Project is a major innovative program developed and implemented by the central administration of the New York City Board of Education. Based on five factors identified by Edmonds (1979)[1] as characterizing more effective schools, and the concept of local school site planning, the project's goal is to improve the educational achievement and environment of New York City's public schools. The five school effectiveness factors are: a) the administrative and instructional leadership of the principal; b) instructional emphasis on basic skills; c) a school climate

[1] Ronald Edmonds, "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor," Educational Leadership, October, 1979, pp 15-27.

which is conducive to pupil learning; d) ongoing assessment of pupil progress; and e) optimistic teacher expectations of pupil ability. Through the efforts of a school-based planning committee representing the various school constituencies, and functioning in support of the principal, the conditions and practices contributing to a more effective school are to be established at each participating school.

In 1979-80, nine public elementary schools and three non-public schools participated in the project.[2] A school liaison is assigned to each school by the project (due to Federal funding regulations, only one liaison is working with the non-public schools). During the first year of the school's participation in the project, the liaison is responsible for conducting a needs assessment and assisting the principal in establishing the School Improvement Committee. A written improvement plan is prepared by the committee to address the needs identified in the school assessment and other concerns raised by the committee.

Over the second and third years of project participation, the principal and committee implement the activities outlined in the improvement plan. The liaison's role at this point is to facilitate the delivery of available resources and materials requested in the plan. In addition, the liaison assists the committee in documenting and assessing the success of the implementation of the plan. Periodically the plan is revised to reflect the results of these interim evaluations.

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[2] During the 1980-81 school year it is anticipated that 16 public and four non-public schools will be participating in the project.

The Local School Development Project

The Local School Development Project of the New York Urban Coalition is similar in design to the School Improvement Project in that Planning Teams, representative of the various school constituencies, are established at participating schools. The Planning Team is responsible for identifying the needs of the school and developing a Comprehensive School Plan to address these needs.

A District Consultant, District Coordinator, and a Resource Coordinator are assigned as a District Team by the project to work with participating schools in each of the five Community School Districts involved in the project. The duties of the five District Teams include the training and assistance of planning team members in needs assessment techniques, team building and comprehensive planning. The District Teams are also responsible for the identification and delivery of resources, services and materials to accomplish the goals and objectives of each school's comprehensive plan.

In addition to the activities of the District Team, the Local School Development Project has developed a principal's training program and the Superintendents' Forum to involve Community Superintendents in the comprehensive planning process. Thirty-seven public elementary and intermediate schools participated in the project during the 1979-80 school year (it is expected that these schools will continue to participate in the coming year).

While both projects report to the Senior Assistant to the Chancellor for Instruction (the Local School Development Project is jointly managed by the New York Urban Coalition and the New York City Board of Education),

each of the projects is also guided by an independent advisory council. These councils are composed of representatives of public interest groups, the City and State education agencies and professional associations. The councils function in an advisory capacity, reviewing project policy and activities.

The Documentation Unit

Functions

The Documentation Unit has four functions: documentation, formative evaluation, technical assistance, and information analysis and dissemination.

Documentation. The documentation function of the Unit involves establishing and maintaining an independent data base to insure impartial, detailed, continuous records of the development and progress of the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects. Besides providing an ongoing account of the evolution and development of the two programs, the data base will provide the projects with 1) a reference source for retrospective examination of specific project activities and events, 2) useful material for the purposes of training and briefing new program staff, and 3) information useful in preparing project funding proposals.

A long range goal of both projects is the development of replicable models of school improvement and institutional change. While the basic vehicle for promoting change is similar, i.e., school site planning by constituents, project approaches are different in terms of program design. The Local School Development Project establishes a District Team responsible for project activities in several district schools and the local District Office. The School Improvement Project assigns one staff member to

each participating school. The longitudinal record of the development of these programs maintained by the Documentation Unit will serve as a reference source to assist policy-makers at the city, district and school levels in making decisions about the adoption or development of alternative school-based planning models.

Formative evaluation. Both projects are expected to evolve through implementation; therefore, a great deal of trial and error will be likely. To maximize the benefits of this exploratory approach to program development, the Documentation Unit will conduct a series of formative evaluations of the projects. The information collected will be available to project administrators to guide them in their decisions to modify various project activities and program design components.

The Unit will also provide participating schools with data which can be used to assess the success of school plan activities implemented during the year, and to prepare annual evaluation reports for project sponsors and funding sources (the Board of Education, the New York Urban Coalition, and the State Education Department). This evaluative data can also be used to identify the areas of school need to be addressed in the coming year.

Technical assistance. Neither the School Improvement Project nor the Local School Development Project have the budgetary flexibility to support other than field staff and limited administrative personnel. Both projects, however, require the skills of social science methodologists during major phases of program implementation. The Documentation Unit will provide this expertise on an ongoing basis. Technical assistance support services will be available to the projects in the development of documentation and needs assessment methodologies, and to the schools as they prepare evaluation procedures for the objectives contained in the school plans.

Analysis and dissemination. A fourth function of the Documentation Unit involves the analysis of the documentary and evaluative data collected, and the dissemination of the results of these analyses. Various analyses of the data have been and will be conducted by the Unit. Until now, these analyses have focused on assessing the effectiveness of project activities across participating schools; in the coming year analytic papers in selected topic areas will also be prepared.

The results of the data analyses will be communicated through a variety of mechanisms, including in-house working papers, formal evaluation reports, journal articles, presentations at professional conferences, and the research dissemination forums used by MEDARP. One of the expectations of the Ford Foundation in funding the Documentation Unit was that information regarding the activities and program designs of the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects be widely disseminated. Therefore, in addition to the Unit's preparation of oral and written presentations of findings, seminars, workshops and conferences for various educational groups will be jointly sponsored by the Documentation Unit and MEDARP.

Documentation Unit Staff

The Documentation Unit staff includes a Unit Manager, two Documentation Associates, a secretary, and several educational consultants. The Unit Manager reports to the Director of MEDARP and supervises the development and implementation of all programmatic and administrative activities of the Unit. The Documentation Associates assist the Unit Manager in the development and implementation of documentation and assessment methodologies, data collection and analysis, report preparation, and technical assistance to the projects. They also plan the activities of educational consultants, who

assist in data collection and analysis and report preparation. The Unit secretary is responsible for all clerical duties and assists the manager with various administrative tasks.

DOCUMENTATION UNIT METHODOLOGIES AND ACTIVITIES

In this section, the methodologies and activities to be applied by the Documentation Unit in conducting the documentation, formative evaluation, technical assistance, and analysis and dissemination functions of the Unit are described. A calendar of Unit activities between November 1979 and August 1981, and the first and second funding period budgets, are also included at the end of this section.

Documentation Methodology

A primary objective of the Unit is the documentation of the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects. The documentation function of the Unit is defined as the establishment and maintenance of an ongoing record of the development of the two projects. It is hoped that maintaining such a record will assist the projects, as well as future school improvement efforts, in understanding the process of change at the school building and system levels.

Over the course of the first funding period (November 1979 - August 1980), documentation efforts focused primarily on project activities at the school building level. Emphasis was placed on recording SIP and LSDP field staff (school liaisons, District Consultants and Coordinators) activities in participating schools, and the reaction and involvement of school administrators, staff, and parents in these activities. This was accomplished through the collection of field staff logs and progress reports, minutes of school planning team/committee meetings, notes on meetings of project administrators with field staff and with participating principals, and the results of an annual interim project assessment.

During the second funding period (September 1980 - August 1981), in addition to the documentation of project activities at the school level as described above, documentation efforts will be expanded to include Community School District involvement in the projects as well as the involvement of city-wide constituency groups. Interviews will be conducted with participating District Superintendents and local School Board members to ascertain their perceptions and degree of involvement in the projects. Members of the advisory councils to the projects will also be interviewed.

Documentary information also includes school building and pupil demographic data and basic skills test results. Project descriptions and proposals, significant memoranda, and various interim reports also serve as sources of documentation.

Schools Included in the Documentation Process

Because of the inherent difficulties in maintaining a comprehensive record of project activities in all of the School Improvement and Local School Development schools, a sample of participating schools will be selected from each of the projects for documentation purposes. A sample of two schools actively involved in the project from each of the five participating districts (ten schools) will be selected from among the LSDP schools. The nine public and one of the three non-public elementary schools presently participating in SIP will comprise the ten-school SIP sample included in the intensive documentation effort. This sample of twenty schools will allow for a concentrated, focused documentation effort which will be comprehensive, substantive and will provide continuity in describing project development and progress at the school level.

Documentation Data Collection Activities

Daily logs and monthly progress reports. The consultant and coordinator assigned to each of the five school districts participating in the Local School Development Project are responsible for preparing monthly progress reports. These reports summarize the activities conducted by the consultant and coordinator as well as the accomplishments of the Planning Teams at each of the participating district schools. They also include a list of objectives the consultant and coordinator have planned for the coming month.

Liaisons with the School Improvement Project are expected to maintain a daily log. In addition to a brief summary of the day's activities, the logs also include the liaison's comments on significant events or conversations which occurred that day. The logs are very useful information sources because they provide a daily record of project activities as well as an analytic interpretation of developing relationships and trends of opinion and reaction in the school. While providing the project administrators and the Documentation Unit with an updated account of activities in participating schools, the logs and progress reports have also been useful to the Unit in developing valid project assessment survey instruments.

The Documentation Unit has been responsible for maintaining a chronological file of Monthly Progress Reports (LSDP) by district, and Daily Logs (SIP) by school, over the duration of both projects. The first Progress Reports are available for January, 1980; the first Daily Logs were submitted in October, 1979.

Planning team/improvement committee minutes. Each School Improvement Committee is responsible for the preparation of formal agendas and minutes for all committee meetings. The agendas and minutes serve to document the activities and decisions of the committee and are distributed school-wide to inform staff and parents of the progress and direction of the committee. School liaisons submit their committee agendas and minutes to the central project office. Each liaison also submits a written, subjective analysis of what occurred at the meeting.

Local School Development Planning Teams are not required to maintain or submit minutes of their meetings. An attempt will be made to encourage Planning Teams which are part of the ten-school project sample selected by the Documentation Unit, to submit agendas and minutes for all meetings.

The Documentation Unit will maintain a file of agendas and minutes of all School Improvement Committee and Planning Team meetings, arranged by school. Included with the School Improvement Committee minutes are the liaison comments regarding the meeting. This information is available for all committee meetings which have been conducted in the schools participating in the School Improvement Project.

Notes of project staff and principal meetings. Both the Local School Development and School Improvement Projects hold regular meetings of project administrators with the principals of participating schools. School Improvement Project principals meet monthly as a group. During

1979-80, meetings of the Local School Development principals were held for the purpose of training; regularly scheduled district-wide meetings of project principals are to be initiated in the fall, 1980. Weekly and/or bi-weekly meetings also occur between the project administrators and their respective field staffs.

Notes are kept at principal and field staff meetings; these meetings are very useful to documentation efforts because discussions usually revolve around timely issues of project implementation. These notes are also referred to by the Unit during preparation of project assessment instruments to ensure that all significant program concerns which developed over the course of the year are addressed in annual evaluation activities.

Interim project assessments. The Documentation Unit periodically collects survey information from project staff and administrators, staff and parents in participating schools. The purpose of this activity is to systematically document the progress of these schools following completion of major phases of the projects. Project phases, which may differ in sequence and emphasis between the two projects, can be generally identified as: 1) school selection and project introduction; 2) school needs assessment; 3) planning team/improvement committee formation; 4) team/committee planning and development of the comprehensive plan; and 5) plan implementation.

The first interim assessment effort took place during May-June 1980. The Documentation Unit conducted interviews with project administrators, field staff and principals, and distributed questionnaires to planning teams/committee members and to school staff and parents not on the planning teams/committees. Based largely on information contained in the daily logs and the monthly progress reports, these survey instruments are

designed to record the experiences and perceptions of project staff and the school community as schools move through the "change process".

To further document project activities and the change process in individual schools, a record of the results of the content analysis of interview and questionnaire responses are maintained by school. This data augments the individual school information available through the logs and progress reports. The interim project assessment results can also be used to revise the overall design of the projects where necessary, and to give the project administrators a clearer sense of the progress of the projects following the completion of each year of program implementation. Further discussion of the interim project assessment activities of the Documentation Unit is provided in this section under "Formative Evaluation Methodology."

School building and pupil data. Various types of demographic and test score data are being compiled by the Documentation Unit for the project schools. This data will provide a longitudinal perspective on the schools both for the purposes of historical information and the identification of trends occurring in these variables over the years prior to and during participation in the projects. Small sample sizes (it should be noted that the n or "number of subjects" in this case is the number of schools) make elaborate statistical analyses such as multiple regression inappropriate. However, these variables offer useful information in examining alternative hypotheses regarding project effects.

Drawing upon information sources at the central Board of Education, the following school building, pupil, and test score data are being collected, starting with the 1974-75 school year:

School Building Data

1. Building capacity is defined by the Board of Education as the ideal number of pupils who can be physically accommodated in the school given its education program. Building capacity is largely determined by the restrictions on class size outlined in the Teachers'Contract and the use of space in the building by other than Board of Education programs, thereby reducing the number of available classrooms.

2. Percent building utilization is the measure of the usage of a school building in relation to its rated capacity.

3. The official school register is based on the number of pupils enrolled in the school on the last day in October in a given year.

4. Average daily register is the sum of the daily registers for the school year divided by the number of days in the school year. Since the enrollment at a school will vary continuously with the admissions and departures of pupils during the year, the average daily register tends to be a more reliable measure of a school's pupil population than is the official October 31 register.

5. Attendance is the mean pupil attendance rate for the school year. Percent attendance is calculated by dividing the average daily register into the average daily attendance.

Pupil Characteristics

1. Ethnic composition is the total number and proportion of pupils within the school falling into the following ethnic categories: Black, Oriental, Hispanic, and Other (includes pupils not classified under any of the previous categories).

2. Socio-economic status variables include:

   a. norm aid to families with Jependent children (AFDC)- the number of children of an age appropriate to the grade span of the school whose families live in the attendance

zone of the school and receive assistance under the New York City AFDC Program. (The Board of Education reports a 95% success rate in the matching of addresses of families receiving AFDC assistance in a particular school attendance zone and the addresses of children on the school's register.);

b. free lunch eligibles - the number of children in the school who qualify for free school lunches under U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations due to low family income; and

c. percent low-income children - a measure of the percentage of children from low-income families attending the school (based on the number of children in the school whose families receive AFDC assistance (weighted 60%) plus the number of pupils eligible for the Free Lunch Program (weighted 40%)).

Achievement Test Data

Based on the results of the annual city-wide reading and math achievement tests, the following information will be collected for each of the schools participating in the projects:

1. the school's rank in the city-wide ranking of elementary and intermediate schools based on the percentage of pupils reading at or above grade level;

2. the school's rank in its Community School District ranking of district elementary and intermediate schools based on the percentage of pupils reading at or above grade level;

3. the percent of pupils for the entire school scoring at or above grade level, one year or less below grade level, one to two years below grade level, two or more years below grade level; and

4. the mean and median grade equivalent scores for each grade level.

Project documents. For the purposes of documenting the initial conceptualization, implementation, and revision of program designs, significant project documents are collected by the Unit. These documents include: 1) the original project descriptions and proposals prepared by the Board of Education and the New York Urban Coalition; 2) project memoranda describing or informing staff and participants of various project

procedures, activities, requirements, etc. (e.g., school selection procedures, comprehensive/improvement plan formats, training workshops); and 3) annual and semi-annual progress reports prepared by the project administrators and field staff.

Copies of the final written Comprehensive School Plans (LSDP) and School Improvement Plans (SIP) developed at each of the 20 sample schools will also be maintained by the Unit. These plans are quite similar to traditional Federal grant proposals in format, although they are not as elaborate and do not contain as much narrative. While there is variation between the two projects, the components to be included in the plans are a statement of need, clearly defined goals and objectives, proposed solutions and activities, and an evaluation design.

Discussions with school district and city-wide constituency representatives. During the 1980-81 school year the Documentation Unit plans to conduct periodic interviews with a sample of superintendents and School Board members of participating Community School Districts,[3] and representatives of the various city-wide organizations and agencies which comprise the advisory councils to the Local School Development and School Improvement Projects (see Appendix A for memberships). The purpose of these interviews is to document the intensity and type of involvment these individuals and groups are having in the projects, as well as their perceptions of the progress and success of the projects. These individuals should provide interesting perspectives on the projects as they interpret project goals and activities from their own particular vantage points.

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[3]As of June, 1980 five districts were involved in SIP and nine in LSDP. Two districts are participating in both projects.

Formative Evaluation Methodology

The formative evaluation activities of the Documentation Unit provide project staff, school participants, and program sponsors with useful feedback regarding project effectiveness. This information will be used to modify project activities and program design. Formative evaluation occurs both formally and informally throughout the course of the School Improvement and the Local School Development Projects. Annual interim project assessments provide a more formal vehicle; consultation at field staff project meetings is the primary means of informal feedback.

Evaluation Activities

Attendance and feedback at project field staff meetings. Documentation Unit staff attend the weekly or bi-weekly meetings of SIP and LSDP field staff. At these meetings, feedback on the daily logs (SIP) and monthly progress reports (LSDP) is provided. This ongoing interaction of the Documentation Unit and field staff ensures that the consultation provided by the Unit will be timely as well as maximally useful and relevant to project concerns. This interaction will also encourage greater trust between the Unit and the projects, and encourage field staff to be analytic in their reflections on activities occurring in the schools.

Interim project assessments. The Documentation Unit will conduct annual assessments of project activities in the sample of participating schools during May-June 1980 and 1981. These assessments will serve to further systematize the Unit's documentation efforts, and will provide the project administrators and field staff with formative evaluation data.

The first interim assessment in 1980 included the following activities:

Review of program objectives - The progress of the projects in accomplishing program objectives and implementing activities as presented in the original project proposals and descriptions was reviewed. This information was useful to project administrators in considering the program design as they planned for those schools continuing in the projects in September, 1980 as well as new schools joining the projects in the fall.

Collection and analysis of survey information - Structured interviews and questionnaires dealing comprehensively with the major phases of both projects have been prepared by the Documentation Unit. These instruments survey project staff and school participant perceptions, attitudes and opinions regarding all aspects of the projects as they were implemented over the year.

Interviews were conducted with project administrators (SIP Director and Manager; LSDP Managers), field staff (SIP Liaisons; LSDP District Consultants and Coordinators), and with the twenty principals of the schools included in the documentation sample (SIP - 9 public and 1 non-public elementary schools; LSDP - 10 public elementary and intermediate schools, two from each participating district). Questionnaires were distributed to the members of the Planning Teams (LSDP) and School Improvement Committees (SIP) in the sample schools. Staff and parents not on the planning teams and improvement committees also received a short questionnaire.

The second interim assessment will be conducted in the spring, 1981; it will include some of the evaluation activities of the first interim assessment and a number of additional program assessment components:

Review of program objectives - The progress of the projects in achieving and implementing objectives and activities as described in their second year funding proposals will be examined.

Collection and analyses of survey information - Survey data will be collected in the documentation sample schools as during the first interim assessment. Additionally, however, interviews will be conducted with a parent and staff member of each of the planning teams/committees in these schools. A number of newly participating project schools will also be included in this evaluation activity to document and assess the effects of modification in the program designs and activities made following the first year of implementation of the projects.

Analysis of test score data - To examine the effect the projects have had on pupil performance in the basic skills areas, reading and math achievement test scores for several years prior to and following implementation of project activities, will be reviewed for each participating school. Mean and median grade equivalent scores and the percentage of students scoring in various achievement categories (i.e., at and above grade level, one month to a year below grade level, one to two years below grade level, and more than two years below grade level) by grade and by building, will be longitudinally reviewed for each school. The purpose of these analyses will be to identify trends in the performance of pupils in the basic skills areas rather than significance testing of pre/post project implementation test score differences.

Significance testing of reading and math achievement test scores will be performed for each of the documentation sample schools. Pupil scores will be used to compare grade and building results on the city-wide achievement tests administered in the spring, 1979, 1980 and 1981. A time series design will be used to conduct these analyses. District schools with comparable pupil populations not participating in the projects may be selected to serve as control groups.

Review of the success of the written school plans - Using the results of the evaluation activities included as a component of each objective of the comprehensive school plans/improvement plans, the Unit will act as an "outside" evaluator in assessing the first year of implementation of the activities outlined in the plans of the documentation sample schools for their use in planning project activities for the coming year. Only the documentation sample schools will be included in this activity; however, if this assessment technique proves to be particularly effective, the Unit will assist the project administrators in offering this "outside" evaluation service to all participating schools.

This evaluation activity will be conducted with eligible School Improvement Project schools in June 1981 following the first year of implementation of school plans. Local School Development Project schools will be included in this activity for the first time in June 1982, as comprehensive school plans will be completed in June 1981 and first implemented over the 1981-82 school year.

Analysis of pre/post school assessment measures - Evaluation profiles have been prepared by the Documentation Unit for the ten School Improvement Project sample schools based on the needs assessment data (other than test scores) collected in the fall, 1979. This data will serve as the pre-project measure of each of the schools on the variables making up the five school effectiveness factors discussed earlier. "Post measures" of these variables will be collected in the spring, 1981 at the schools. A comparison of pre/post measures will be made by school to ascertain changes in any of these school characteristics following two years of school participation in the project.

Needs assessments will be conducted in the Local School Development schools in the fall, 1980. Evaluation profiles will be compiled for the ten-school documentation sample. "Post measures" and pre/post comparisons will not be undertaken by the Documentation Unit until spring, 1982.

These school re-assessment activities will provide participating schools and project administrators with evaluative information regarding the effectiveness of project activities in addressing the school needs identified two years previously, as well as a current indication of emerging school needs. This knowledge will assist schools in the planning of project activities for the coming school year.

Analysis of the information collected during these interim assessments will be shared with the project administrators and participating schools on a timely basis through concise statistical summaries and internal memoranda. This data will be made available to the projects within the limits of maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of individual respondents.

The Documentation Unit will prepare narrative reports summarizing the results of the annual project evaluations. These reports will be shared with the administrators and staff of the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects, the central Board of Education, and with funding sponsors. The reports will eventually be made available for general dissemination. Again, participant and school anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the reports. (See Appendix B for further comments regarding confidentiality of data.)

Analysis and Dissemination

The Documentation Unit plans to conduct various analyses of the documentary and evaluative data which have been collected. These analyses will include the annual assessments of the interview and questionnaire data and test score information as well as the preparation of a series

of analytic papers in selected topic areas. These papers will draw largely on the documentary data collected and will be more descriptive and qualitative in format than the annual evaluation reports prepared by the Unit.

Tentatively, the topics of the analytic papers will include an examination of the two models for school site planning implemented by the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects. This report will focus on the planning processes, the phases and components of the program designs, and the organizational conditions necessary for successful implementation of such projects. A second paper under consideration is an analysis of the aggregated results of the need assessments conducted in the ten School Improvement Project schools. These schools comprise a representative cross section of the New York City public elementary schools and such an analysis will provide an indication of the most pressing concerns and issues of the city's elementary schools. A third report will focus more closely on the variation in program implementation among the five Community School Districts participating in the Local School Development Project. The LSDP process of school self-improvement is contingent upon District Office support for and eventual institutionalization of the capacity for school-based planning; therefore, an analysis of this process as it has evolved in the participating districts will be both theoretically and practically useful.

Written and Oral Presentation of Findings

Written presentation of the results of the Documentation Unit data analyses will include the preparation of 1) concise statistical summaries of evaluative data for the project administrators and, in some cases, for participating schools,

2) annual project evaluation reports for the State Education Department, 3) yearly narrative reports presenting the results of the Unit's interim project assessment activities, and 4) a series of analytic papers. The majority of these reports will be available for general dissemination, and will also be drawn upon by the Unit in writing articles for wider communication of findings in professional publications.

Oral presentation of the results of the Unit's analyses will occur at professional conferences and through a series of workshops/seminars to be conducted with the Metropolitan Educational Development and Research Project (MEDARP). These workshops/seminars will be tailored to the interests of a variety of educational groups including parents, teachers, school administrators, and educational researchers.

Technical Assistance

The Documentation Unit offers technical assistance to the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects in a variety of areas, particularly in the development of documentation, needs assessment and evaluation methodologies. The availability of supportive services from the Documentation Unit serves to "repay" the projects for their cooperation with the various data and information collection activities of the Unit.

Activities

Documentation methodologies. The Documentation Unit has provided, and will continue to provide, guidance to project administrators in the development and modification of sources of program documentation, such as the notes kept by field staff (liaison daily logs, District Consultant/Coordinator monthly progress reports) and minutes of Planning Team/School Improvement Committee meetings.

Needs assessment methodology. The Unit played a major role in the development of the School Improvement Project needs assessment methodology through the design of data collection instruments, data analysis procedures, and the needs assessment report format.

The Unit developed survey instruments which operationalized the five school effectiveness factors (see Appendix C for a listing of the variables making up each of the factors). The survey instruments included a teacher questionnaire, two forms of a teacher interview schedule, and interview forms for the principal, assistant principal, special program teachers, auxiliary staff, and paraprofessionals. The Building and Grounds Observational Assessment Instrument was also developed to periodically evaluate the safety, maintenance, and use of various interior and exterior school spaces when assessing the schools along the school climate factor.

The first editions of these instruments were used by the School Improvement Project to conduct needs assessments in participating schools in the fall, 1979. Based on the results of this first administration, some of the instruments have been revised by the Documentation Unit. These "second editions" are being used by the School Improvement Project to conduct needs assessments in schools scheduled to begin participation in the project in the fall, 1980.

The Documentation Unit has also prepared two new questionnaires to replace the Teacher Questionnaire. The original Teacher Questionnaire served only to supplement information gathered in the interviews with

instructional staff. The new questionnaires (one for classroom teachers and one for special program teachers), however, closely parallel the items included on the instructional staff interview forms. These new questionnaires will be used by the project to shorten the time required to complete the data collection phase of the needs assessment; half of the instructional staff will receive personal interviews and the other half will be asked to complete the new questionnaire or "self-administering instructional staff interview form." These self-administering interview forms are among the first of a number of survey instruments which will comprise a school self-assessment package being developed by the Unit.

The Unit also assisted liaisons in the gathering of school building, pupil and test score data available from central Board sources. This data was collected for each school for the five year period prior to participation in the project and was included in the needs assessment report.

To assist Liaisons in the interpretation of the interview data, content analysis procedures which were used to quantify interview responses were developed by the Documentation Unit. The process of establishing the response categories for the individual interview items also facilitated the revision and refinement of the original needs assessment interview schedules and the preparation of the self-administering versions of these instruments.

A needs assessment report format was outlined by the Documentation Unit to guide the liaisions in the preparation of these reports. The reports were narrative in design and consisted of four sections: School Description, Methods, Results (presented by effectiveness factor), and Discussion and Conclusions.

The Unit is preparing a revision of this report format. The new report will consist largely of statistical summaries of the assessment data, followed by brief interpretations of the results by the liaisons. The revision of the report format was undertaken to shorten the length of time necessary to prepare the report, as well as to increase the amount of "objective" data presentation and reduce the "subjective" or interpretive content of the reports. The new report format has been piloted in one school and will be adopted as the required reporting style for the project next year.

The same assistance and support (instrument design, analysis procedures, report format) is being offered to the Local School Development Project as project staff prepare and implement their school needs assessments in the fall, 1980. Thus far, the Unit has assisted the project in the development of the School Profile component of the needs assessment. The LSDP School Profiles are longitudinal summaries of various pupil, school building, and test score data prepared for each school.

Evaluation methodology. In addition to assisting in the original design of the SIP improvement plan format, the Documentation Unit will review and/or develop evaluation strategies for objectives and activities included in each school plan. Again, the Unit will offer the same assistance to the Local School Development Project as schools prepare their written comprehensive plans over the 1980-1981 school year.

Summary of Documentation Unit Activities

Various documentation, formative evaluation, technical assistance, and data analysis activities of the Documentation Unit have been initiated over the first funding period (November 1979 - August 1980) of this project. The information collected by the Unit for the purpose of documentation of the School Improvement and Local School Development Projects has included field notes of project staff, notes of project staff and principal meetings, minutes of planning team/improvement committee sessions, school building and pupil statistical data, achievement test scores, and relevant project documents.

The first interim assessment of both projects was conducted in the spring, 1980. The Unit's analyses of this data resulted in the preparation of two preliminary analysis reports which were presented to the project administrators in July, two narrative interim project evaluation reports[4] completed by early fall, and submission of a Title IV-C State Education Department Annual Evaluation Report for the School Improvement Project by August 31. Staff of the Documentation Unit have also provided formative evaluation consultative services on an ongoing basis at project staff meetings.

Technical assistance in terms of various project documentation strategies was provided to both projects by the Documentation Unit over the first funding period. Additional technical assistance offered to the

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[4] The School Improvement Project: First Annual Assessment (August 1980) The Local School Developement Project: First Annual Assessment (October 1980).

School Improvement Project included support in the development of the school needs assessment methodology and the evaluation components of the School Improvement Plans.

Over the second funding period (September 1980-August 1981) a number of new activities are being implemented by the Unit. Documentation activities will continue as implemented during the first funding period and will also include the collection of interview data from school district and city-wide constituency representatives involved in the projects. Interim project assessment activities will be expanded to include analysis of achievement test score data, and evaluation of improvement plan activities and comparison of pre/post project implementation school assessment data for the School Improvement documentation sample schools. Project assessment reports prepared by the Unit in the summer, 1981 will also include a Title I/PSEN State Education Department Annual Evaluation Report for the Local School Development Project.

Technical assistance will be offered to the Local School Development Project in the development of school needs assessment methodologies and the evaluation activities to be included in the Comprehensive School Plans. Finally, the Unit will prepare a number of analytic reports drawing upon the documentary data collected, and will initiate the first in a series of workshops/seminars presenting the findings of the Unit's activities.

Schedule of Activities

Documentation Data Collection Activities

1.	Staff field notes	
	Daily logs (SIP)	10/79 - ongoing
	Monthly progress reports (LSDP)	1/80 - ongoing
2.	Minutes of improvement committee/planning team meetings	
	Improvement committees (SIP)	2/80 - ongoing
	Planning teams (LSDP)	2/80 - ongoing
3.	Notes of project staff and principal meetings	
	SIP staff meetings	1/80 - ongoing
	SIP principal meetings	1/80 - ongoing
	LSDP staff meetings	2/80 - ongoing
	LSDP principal meetings	2/80 - ongoing
4.	Interim project assessments (interviews, questionnaires)	May - June annually
5.	School building and pupil statistical data, and achievement test scores	June annually
6.	Project documents	Ongoing
7.	Interviews with school district and city-wide constituency representatives	Mid-school year 1980-1981

Formative Evaluation Activities

1.	Attendance and feedback at project field staff meetings	
	SIP	1/80 - ongoing
	LSDP	2/80 - ongoing
2.	Interim project assessments	May - June annually

Technical Assistance Activities

1. Documentation methodologies	Ongoing
2. Needs assessment methodologies	
SIP	8/79 - ongoing
LSDP	9/80 - ongoing
3. Development of school plan evaluation components	
School Improvement Plans (SIP)	6/80 - ongoing
Comprehensive School Plans (LSDP)	6/81 - ongoing

Data Analysis/Reports/Dissemination of Results

1. Preliminary Data Analysis Report of Interim Project Assessment Activities prepared for the project administrators	July annually
2. State Education Department Annual Evaluation Report	
Title IV-C	8/80 annually
Title I/PSEN (LSDP)	8/81 annually
3. Narrative Interim Project Evaluation Report	September annually
4. Analytic Papers	
Examination of the SIP and LSDP Models for School Site Planning	November-February, 1980-81
An Assessment of NYC Schools Utilizing Edmonds' School Effectiveness Factors	
District Implementation of the LSDP Planning Process	
5. MEDARP Documentation Unit Workshops/Seminars	1/81 - ongoing

Documentation Unit Budget for the
First Funding Period (September 1980-August 1981)

Personal Services	
Total Salaries	$46,646
Total Benefits	9,039
Other than Personal Services	
Office Supplies	1,047
Office Furniture and Equipment	2,256
Postage	150
Communications	528
Out-of-Town Travel	233
Consultant Services	7,316
Special Services	41
OTPS Total	11,571
PS Total	55,685
Indirect Costs	3,878
Grand Total	$71,134

Documentation Unit Budget for the
Second Funding Period (September 1980-August 1981)

Personal Services	
Total Salaries	$93,736
Total Benefits	28,486
Other than Personal Services	
Office Supplies	600
Printing Supplies	3,000
Office Furniture and Equipment	5,000
Postage	500
Communications	100
Office Services	1,000
Local Travel	1,000
Out-of-Town Travel	1,000
Consultant Services	18,000
Special Services	1,500
OTPS Total	31,700
PS Total	122,222
Balance Unallocated	119,834
Grand Total*	$273,756

*The Grand Total does not reflect Indirect Costs because the Ford Foundation has waived these costs over the second funding period.

Appendix A: Composition of Project Advisory Councils

Council on Local School Development (LSDP)

- New York Urban Coalition
- Alliance of Business, Labor and Education
- United Parents Association
- New York City Board of Education
- New York Community School Board Association
- New York Foundation
- New York State Education Department
- Council on Children and Families
- New York City Association of Superintendents
- Council of Supervisors and Administrators
- United Federation of Teachers
- Public Education Association

Title IV-C Advisory Committee to the School Improvement Project (SIP)

- New York City Board of Education
- Office of Catholic Education Diocese of Brooklyn
- United Parents Association
- New York City Association of Superintendents
- New York State Education Department
- Council of Supervisors and Administrators
- United Federation of Teachers
- Public Education Association

Appendix B: Availability of Data.

An overriding concern of the Documentation Unit must be assurance of the confidentiality and anonymity of all "raw data" and information sources. That is, every attempt is being made to guarantee that no district, school, or individual is identified in any manner either in files maintained by the Documentation Unit or in written or oral reports prepared by the Unit or by other individuals or organizations drawing on the data collected by the Unit.

As a further means of increasing information security, access to the data cannot be granted prior to the preparation of a formal research proposal by the individual or organization seeking to use the data. The proposal would be reviewed and approved by the Directors of the School Improvement Project and/or Local School Development Project and the Proposal Review Committee of the Office of Educational Evaluation. The proposal would state the uses to be made of the data as well as a knowledge of and willingness to comply with all needs for confidentiality and anonymity.

It is very clear, based on the type of information that has already been collected by the Documentation Unit, that much of the data, if used improperly, could be highly damaging to individuals and organizations. A quote taken out of context, the insensitive discussion of the needs or problems of a particular school, or the careless interpretation of the documented actions or reactions of individuals or school communities, could destroy the sense of integrity and trust which project administrators and field staff have worked so hard to develop between themselves and the schools.

Appendix C: Five School Effectiveness Factors

Presented below are the variables comprising each of the five school factors hypothesized by Edmonds (1979) as characterizing more effective schools. The Documentation Unit assisted the School Improvement Project in operationalizing the five factors and developed instruments to be used by the School Improvement Project in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of participating schools in each of the factor areas. This operationalization continues to serve as the basis for the School Improvement Project's school needs assessment methodology.

Factor A - Administrative Style

I. Principal as Instructional Leader
- Plays a major role in the establishment of schoolwide instructional goals, instructional practices, and curriculum.
- Establishment of formal procedures for staff interaction in curricular and instructional matters.
- Provides ongoing in-service training and instructional supervision.
- Sees to the coordination of instructional activities within and between grades and programs.

II. Principal as Administrative Head or Organizational Leader
- Provides sufficient supplies, instructional materials, supplemental resources, school equipment.
- Formalizes and communicates school policies, procedures, and regulations regarding such topics as school safety, discipline, attendance, grading, promotion, etc.
- Clearly establishes and communicates the responsibilities and duties of staff assignments.
- Establishes effective (responsive) lines of communication between himself, staff and parents.
- Provides for staff input in administrative matters.

Factor B - Instructional Emphasis on Basic Skills (Reading, Mathematics, Writing)

I. School-wide
- Presence of effective school-wide basic skills programs.
- Presence, acceptance of and adherence to a school-wide written curriculum and specific instructional objectives by grade and basic skill subject areas.
- Formalized amount of classroom instructional time set aside for basic skills instruction school-wide.
- Sufficient instructional materials (texts, kits, etc.) in the basic skills subject areas.

II. Classroom
- Type and the amount of group basic skills classroom instruction (small group, total group).
- Individualized instructional planning.
- Written daily plans.
- Active student participation in basic skills instruction.
- Use of commercial reading/math kits.

Factor C - School Climate

I. Physical Environment
- Orderly school atmosphere
- Sufficient building security.
- Maintenance of interior and exterior building spaces in terms of repair and cleanliness.

II. Social Tone
- Positive staff morale
- Positive pupil attitude
- Effective lines of communication between the principal, staff and parents.
- Consensus of school staff and parental opinion regarding educational goals.

Factor D - Ongoing Diagnosis and Assessment of Pupil Progress

- Instructional use of achievement, diagnostic, and criterion-referenced test results.
- Instructional use of teacher-made tests.
- Ongoing individualized pupil evaluation and instructional planning.
- Monitoring of pupil progress based on teacher judgment of pupil performance.
- An effective school-wide record keeping system to facilitate teacher awareness of student progress.
- Regular communication with parents regarding pupil progress.

Factor E - Teacher Expectations

- Optimistic expectancies for pupil achievement.
- Teacher enthusiam - "All children can learn."
- Encouragement of active student participation in instructional activities.
- Setting of instructional goals and objectives which challenge pupil abilities.

In addition to the questionnaire and interview items related to the five factors, the needs assessment survey instruments include open-ended items which give respondents an opportunity to express their perceptions of the school's strengths, weaknesses and problem areas, as well as suggest potential solutions, in any areas not covered by the five factors.